



# DIOCESAN PRESS SERVICE

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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80193

May 29, 1980

## DIOCESE, PB FUND

### MEET FLORIDA CRISES

by Jay Mallin

Editor, The Net

MIAMI -- As crisis after crisis beset southeast Florida, the Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Southeast Florida moved rapidly to provide assistance to the distressed.

Three critical affairs have confronted the community and the diocese:

- The arrival of hundreds of impoverished, often ill Haitian refugees in small boats.
- The sealift which has brought more than 60,000 Cuban refugees to Florida.
- Rioting in the black communities of Miami which resulted in at least fifteen dead and 300 people injured, plus property damage estimated at over \$100 million.

Parishes in the diocese have taken up collections of clothing for the Haitians. Bishop Calvin O. Schofield Jr. made two requests of the Episcopal Church's Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief: one for a grant of \$10,000 to be given to the Christian Community Services Agency to assist in its relief work among the Haitians, the other for \$5,000 to enable preparation of an old house on the grounds of Holy Cross Church in Miami which will be staffed and equipped to lend assistance to Haitian and Cuban refugees. Both requests were approved by the Fund.

Bishop Schofield and other Miami-area church leaders signed and sent to President Jimmy Carter a plea that Haitian refugees be granted the same status as political refugees that has been given to Cuban arrivals. This plea was backed up by Presiding Bishop John M. Allin who called upon President Carter "to give serious consideration to granting political asylum to the Haitians now arriving in the United States as refugees." Since 1975 the Presiding Bishop's Fund has provided \$89,000 as support for Haitian refugees, including the two latest grants to this Diocese.

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The Presiding Bishop's Fund this year granted \$70,000 for the chartering of flights to bring released political prisoners from Cuba. In the period March 3 through May 5 a total of six flights, paid for entirely by the Episcopal Church, brought 705 ex-prisoners and family members to freedom. Planned additional flights were cancelled due to the uncertain situation inside Cuba. Engaged in assisting the refugees aboard the flights themselves and upon their arrival in Miami were the Rev. Leo Alard of St. John's, Homestead; the Rev. Max Salvador of Todos los Santos, Miami; and the Rev. Geoffrey Evans of Holy Comforter, Miami.

As they did for the Haitians, Episcopal parishes provided clothing for the arriving Cubans. The giving continued when the massive sealift began.

The Federal government took over the processing and caring for the refugees, and the need for aid from area churches then changed. Assistance was required in helping individuals and families settle in areas other than Florida, particularly refugees without close family members living in that state.

On the suggestion of the diocese, representatives of churches in the area met at the diocesan offices on May 5. Also present were officials of the Christian Community Service Agency.

At this meeting, an Inter-Faith Refugee Committee was set up. It accepted the responsibility of serving as a funnel for information to national churches regarding resettlement needs and processes. It will coordinate the resettlement work of the churches and assist CCSA, which is to serve as the focal point of resettlement work. Fr. Leo Alard was appointed by Bishop Schofield to be the Episcopal representative on the committee.

The rioting in Miami, resulting from increasing economic pressures within the black community and sparked by the acquittal of four police officers charged with beating a black businessman to death, broke out on the night of May 17.

That night the Rev. Canon Theodore R. Gibson, rector of Christ Church in one of the affected areas, rescued two men attacked by a mob. He saw that they were safely escorted away, and then he redirected traffic away from the area. Canon Gibson, also a city commissioner for Miami, was one of the leading civil rights activists in the turbulent sixties.





The following day, even as rioters ran rampant, killing, burning and looting, Bishop Schofield kept his visitation to the Church of the Incarnation in the badly affected Liberty City area. On one occasion he was told to get off the streets by an angry black.

Bishop Schofield, who preached at two services at Incarnation and confirmed a class, told the congregation, "I would not be fit to be your bishop if I were not here with you."

The next day Bishop Schofield attended an emergency meeting of the Florida region of the National Conference of Christians and Jews and the county Community Relations Board.

He told the meeting: "Racism is on the increase across the nation, and there is a deep feeling of powerlessness on the part of many people. What is needed is not a bandaid but longterm effects that will change the lifestyles of the people."

The meeting took these steps:

- A joint statement was issued which called for "moderation and peace from all citizens in our community." It added: "Our goal is a community based on social justice for all. This cannot be achieved without a systemic approach to resolving social problems in our community and the nation." In the wake of the acquittal of the police officers, a federal investigation was launched which was expected to bring indictments on civil rights charges of the four men. The clergy statement said the group "endorses the FBI investigation into the violation of the civil rights of Arthur McDuffie" (the black man allegedly killed by the officers).

- A petition was prepared for circulation among churchgoers the following Sunday. It said: "We, the undersigned, register our shock and outrage at the verdict of the Arthur McDuffie trial and the racism inherent throughout the case. We further endorse the federal investigation of the trial."

- The clergymen called a meeting of leading businessmen in the community to seek positive actions which would alleviate the racial pressures in the community that were directly related to economic distress.

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PICTURE CAPTIONS

# 80193/1      Hundreds of Haitian refugees have been processed by U.S. Immigration officials after a record number arrived on south Florida's shores this spring. The Homestead Armory, Homestead, Fla., above, is one site for refugee processing. Parishes in the Episcopal Diocese of Southeast Florida provided clothing for the arriving refugees. An Inter-Faith Refugee Committee has been set up to coordinate the resettlement work of the churches and to assist the Christian Community Service Agency. Since 1975 the Episcopal Church's Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief has provided \$89,000 as support for Haitian refugees, including two recent grants totaling \$15,000. Contributions -- designated Cuban/Haitian Appeal -- may be sent to the Presiding Bishop's Fund, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. (Photo Credit: WIDE WORLD PHOTOS).

# 80193/2      A sealift has brought some 65,000 refugees from Cuba to Florida this spring, such as this boat load of homeless persons. Parishes in the Episcopal Diocese of Southeast Florida have responded to an appeal by Bishop Calvin O. Schofield, Jr., for clothing for the newly arrived immigrants. Presiding Bishop John M. Allin has issued a special appeal for Episcopalians to respond to the refugee crisis with contributions and sponsorship of those who have no families in the U.S. This year the Presiding Bishop's Fund has granted \$70,000 for the chartering of six flights to bring released political prisoners from Cuba to Florida. Contributions may be made -- marked Cuban/Haitian Appeal -- to the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. (Photo Credit: WIDE WORLD PHOTOS).

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